

Technocensorship: When Corporations Serve As a Front for Government Censors



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"Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens. It creates a country where everyone lives in fear. We must, therefore, be on our guard

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against extremists who urge us to adopt police state measures. Such persons advocate breaking down the guarantees of the Bill of Rights in order to get at the communists. They forget that if the Bill of Rights were to be broken down, all groups, even the most conservative, would be in danger from the arbitrary power of government.”—Harry S. Truman, Special Message to the Congress on the Internal Security of the United States (August 8, 1950)

Nothing good can come from allowing the government to sidestep the Constitution.

Unfortunately, the government has become an expert at disregarding constitutional roadblocks intended to protect the rights of the citizenry.

When these end-runs don't suffice, the government hides behind the covert, clandestine, classified language of national security; or obfuscates, complicates, stymies, and bamboozles; or creates manufactured diversions to keep the citizenry in the dark; or *works through private third parties not traditionally bound by the Constitution*.

This last tactic is increasingly how the government gets away with butchering our freedoms, by having its corporate partners serve as a front for its nefarious deeds.

This is how the police state has managed to carry out an illegal secret dragnet surveillance program on the American people over the course of multiple presidential administrations.

Relying on a set of privacy loopholes, the White House (under Presidents Obama, Trump and now Biden) has been sidestepping the Fourth Amendment by paying AT&T to allow federal, state, and local law enforcement to access—without a warrant—the phone records of Americans who are not suspected of a crime.

The government used a similar playbook to get around the First Amendment, packaged as an effort to control the spread of speculative or false information in the name of national security.

As the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on Weaponization of the Federal Government revealed, the Biden administration worked in tandem with social media companies to censor content related to COVID-19, including humorous jokes, credible information and so-called disinformation.

Likening the government's heavy-handed attempts to pressure social media companies to suppress content critical of COVID vaccines or the election to "an almost dystopian scenario," Judge Terry Doughty warned that "the United States Government seems to have assumed a role similar to an Orwellian 'Ministry of Truth.'"

Restricting access to social media has become a popular means of internet censorship.

Dare to voice politically incorrect views in anything louder than a whisper on social media and you might find yourself suspended on Twitter, shut out of Facebook, and banned across various social media platforms. This authoritarian intolerance masquerading as tolerance, civility and love is what comedian George Carlin referred to as "fascism pretending to be manners."

Social media censorship runs the gamut from content blocking, throttling, and filtering to lockouts, shutdowns, shadow banning and de-platforming.

In fact, these tactics are at the heart of several critical cases before the U.S. Supreme Court over who gets to control, regulate or remove what content is shared on the internet: the individual, corporate censors or the government.

Yet what those who typically champion the right of corporations to be free from government meddling get wrong about these cases is that there can be no free speech when corporations such as Facebook, Google or YouTube become a front for—or extensions of—government censors.

This is the very definition of technocensorship.

On paper—under the First Amendment, at least—we are technically free to speak.

In reality, however, we are now only as free to speak as a government official—or corporate entities such as Facebook, Google or YouTube—may allow.

Clothed in tyrannical self-righteousness, technocensorship is powered by technological behemoths (both corporate and governmental) working in tandem to achieve a common goal: to muzzle, silence and altogether eradicate any speech that runs afoul of the government's own approved narrative.

This is political correctness taken to its most chilling and oppressive extreme.

This authoritarian impulse to censor and silence “dangerous” speech masquerading as tolerance, civility and a concern for safety (what comedian George Carlin referred to as “fascism pretending to be manners”) is the end result of a politically correct culture that has become radicalized, institutionalized and tyrannical.

You see, the government is not protecting us from “dangerous” disinformation campaigns. It is laying the groundwork to insulate us from “dangerous” ideas that might cause us to think for ourselves and, in so doing, challenge the power elite's stranglehold over our lives.

Thus far, the tech giants have been able to sidestep the First Amendment by virtue of their non-governmental status, but it's a dubious distinction at best when they are marching in lockstep with the government's dictates.

As Philip Hamburger and Jenin Younes write for *The Wall Street Journal*: “The First Amendment prohibits the government from ‘abridging the freedom of speech.’ Supreme Court doctrine makes clear that government can't constitutionally evade the amendment by working through private companies.”

It remains to be seen whether the Supreme Court can see itself clear to recognizing that censorship by social media companies *acting at the behest of the government* runs afoul of the First Amendment.

Bottom line: either we believe in free speech or we don't.

The answer to the political, legal and moral challenges of our day should always be more speech, not less.

Any individual or group—prominent or not—who is censored, silenced and made to disappear from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram for voicing ideas that are deemed politically incorrect, hateful, dangerous or conspiratorial should be cause for alarm across the entire political spectrum.

To ignore the long-term ramifications of such censorship is dangerously naïve, because whatever powers the government and its corporate operatives are allowed to claim now *will* eventually be used against the populace at large.

These social shunning tactics borrow heavily from the mind control tactics used by authoritarian cults as a means of controlling its members. As Dr. Steven Hassan writes in *Psychology Today*: “By ordering members to be cut off, they can no longer participate. Information and sharing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences are stifled. Thought-stopping and use of loaded terms keep a person constrained into a black-and-white, all-or-nothing world. This controls members through fear and guilt.”

This mind control can take many forms, but the end result is an enslaved, compliant populace incapable of challenging tyranny.

As Rod Serling, creator of *The Twilight Zone*, once observed, “We’re developing a new citizenry, one that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won’t be able to think.”

The problem is that we’ve allowed ourselves to be persuaded that we need someone else to think and speak for us, and we’ve bought into the idea that we need the government and its corporate partners to shield us from that which is ugly or upsetting or mean. The result is a society in which we’ve stopped debating among ourselves, stopped thinking for ourselves, and stopped believing that we can fix our own problems and resolve our own differences.

In short, we have reduced ourselves to a largely silent, passive, polarized populace incapable of working through our own problems and reliant on the government to

protect us from our fears.

As Nat Hentoff, that inveterate champion of the First Amendment, once observed, “The quintessential difference between a free nation, as we profess to be, and a totalitarian state, is that here everyone, including a foe of democracy, has the right to speak his mind.”

What this means is championing the free speech rights of those with whom we might disagree.

That’s why James Madison, the author of the Bill of Rights, fought for a First Amendment that protected the “minority” against the majority, ensuring that even in the face of overwhelming pressure, a minority of one—even one who espouses distasteful viewpoints—would still have the right to speak freely, pray freely, assemble freely, challenge the government freely, and broadcast his views in the press freely. He understood that freedom for those in the unpopular minority constitutes the ultimate tolerance in a free society.

The government has no tolerance for freedom or free speech of any kind that challenges its chokehold on power.

At some point or another, depending on how the government and its corporate allies define what constitutes “disinformation,” “hate” or “extremism,” “we the people” might *all* be considered guilty of some thought crime or speech transgression or other.

Yet as I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, it’s a slippery slope from censoring so-called illegitimate ideas to silencing truth.

Eventually, as George Orwell predicted, telling the truth will become a revolutionary act.

Ultimately, the government’s war on free speech—and that’s exactly what it is—is a war that is driven by a government fearful of its people.

As President John F. Kennedy observed, “[A] nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.”

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